arXiv:gr-qc/0311083v1 26 Nov 2003

Dark Energy *

Norbert Straumann
Institute for Theoretical Physics University of Zurich,
CR–8057 Zurich, Switzerland

February 7, 2008

Abstract

After some remarks about the history and the mystery of the vacuum energy I shall review the current evidence for a cosmologically significant nearly homogeneous exotic energy density with negative pressure ('Dark Energy'). Special emphasis will be put on the recent polarization measurements by WMAP and their implications. I shall conclude by addressing the question: Do the current astronomical observations really imply the existence of a dominant dark energy component?

1 Introduction

The new results of WMAP have strengthened the evidence that the recent ($z < 1$) Universe is dominated by an exotic nearly homogeneous energy density with *negative* pressure.The simplest candidate for this so-called *Dark Energy* is a cosmological term in Einstein's field equations, a possibility that has been considered during all the history of relativistic cosmology. Independently of what the nature of this energy is, one thing is clear since a long time: The energy density belonging to the cosmological constant is not larger than the critical cosmological density, and thus incredibly small by particle physics standards. This is a profound mystery, since we expect that all sorts of *vacuum energies* contribute to the effective cosmological constant.

is point a second puzzle has to be emphasized, because of which it is hard to believe that the vacuum energy constitutes the missing two thirds of the

*Invited talk at the Seventh Hungarian Relativity Workshop, 10-15 August, 2003, Sárospatak, Hungary.

average energy density of the *present* Universe. If this would be the case, we would also be confronted with the following *cosmic coincidence* problem: Since the vacuum energy density is constant in time – at least after the QCD phase transition –, while the matter energy density decreases as the Universe expands, it would be more than surprising if the two would be comparable just at about the present time, while their ratio was tiny in the early Universe and would become very large in the distant future. The goal of so-called *quintessence models* is to avoid such an extreme fine-tuning. In many ways people thereby repeat what has been done in inflationary cosmology. The main motivation there was, as is well-known, to avoid excessive fine tunings of standard big bang cosmology (horizon and flatness problems). – In this talk I am not going to say more on this topical subject. I want to emphasize, however, that the quintessence models do *not* solve the first problem; so far also not the second one.

2 History and mystery of the vacuum energy

Before reviewing the current evidence for a nonvanishing vacuum energy or some effective equivalent, it may not be out of place to begin with some scattered historical remarks. (For a more extended discussion, see [1] and [2].) I begin with the classical aspect of the historical development.

As is well-known, Einstein introduced the cosmological term when he applied general relativity the first time to cosmology [3]. Presumably the main reason why Einstein turned so soon after the completion of general relativity to cosmology had much to do with Machian ideas on the origin of inertia, which played in those years an important role in Einstein's thinking. His intention was to eliminate all vestiges of absolute space. He was, in particular, convinced that isolated masses cannot impose a structure on space at infinity. Einstein was actually thinking about the problem regarding the choice of boundary conditions at infinity already in spring 1916. In a letter to Michele Besso from 14 May 1916 he also mentions the possibility of the world being finite. A few month later he expanded on this in letters to Willem de Sitter. It is along these lines that he postulated that he postulated a Universe that is spatially finite and closed, a Universe in which no boundary conditions are needed. He then believed that this was the only way to satisfy what he later [5] named *Machs principle*, in the sense that the metric field should be determined uniquely by the energy-momentum tensor.

In addition, Einstein assumed that the Universe was *static*. This was not unreasonable at the time, because the relative velocities of the stars as observed were small. (Recall that astronomers only learned later that spiral

nebulae are independent star systems outside the Milky Way. This was definitely established when in 1924 Hubble found that there were Cepheid variables in Andromeda and also in other galaxies.)

These two assumptions were, however, not compatible with Einstein's original field equations. For this reason, Einstein added the famous Λ-term, which is compatible with the principles of general relativity, in particular with the energy-momentum law $\nabla_\nu T^{\mu\nu} = 0$ for matter.

To de Sitter Einstein emphasized in a letter on 12 March 1917, that his cosmological model was intended primarily to settle the question "whether the basic idea of relativity can be followed through its completion, or whether it leads to contradictions". And he adds whether the model corresponds to reality was another matter.

Only later Einstein came to realize that Mach's philosophy is predicated on an antiquated ontology that seeks to reduce the metric field to an epiphenomenon of matter. It became increasingly clear to him that the metric field has an independent existence, and his enthusiasm for what he called Mach's principle later decreased. In a letter to F.Pirani he wrote in 1954: *"As a matter of fact, one should no longer speak of Mach's principle at all."* [6]. GR still preserves ome remnant of Newton's absolute space and time.

Surprisingly to Einstein, de Sitter discovered in the same year, 1917, a completely different static cosmological model which also incorporated the cosmological constant, but was *anti-Machian*, because it contained no matter [7]. For this reason, Einstein tried to discard it on various grounds (more on this below). The original form of the metric was:

$$g = \Big[1 - (\frac{r}{R})^2\Big]dt^2 - \frac{dr^2}{1 - (\frac{r}{R})^2} - r^2(d\vartheta^2 + \sin^2\vartheta d\varphi^2).$$

Here, the spatial part is the standard metric of a three-sphere of radius R, with $R = (3/\Lambda)^{1/2}$. The model had one very interesting property: For light sources moving along static world lines there is a gravitational redshift, which became known as the *de Sitter effect*. This was thought to have some bearing on the redshift results obtained by Slipher. Because the fundamental (static) worldlines in this model are not geodesic, a freely- falling object released by any static observer will be seen by him to accelerate away, generating also local velocity (Doppler) redshifts corresponding to *peculiar velocities*. In the second edition of his book [8], published in 1924, Eddington writes about this:

"de Sitter's theory gives a double explanation for this motion of recession; first there is a general tendency to scatter (...); second there is a general displacement of spectral lines to the red in distant objects owing to the slowing

down of atomic vibrations (...), which would erroneously be interpreted as a motion of recession."

I do not want to enter into all the confusion over the de Sitter universe. One source of this was the apparent singularity at $r = R = (3/\Lambda)^{1/2}$. This was at first thoroughly misunderstood even by Einstein and Weyl. ('The Einstein-de Sitter-Weyl-Klein Debate' is now published in Vol.8 of the *Collected Papers* [4].) At the end, Einstein had to acknowledge that de Sitter's solution is fully regular and matter-free and thus indeed a counter example to Mach's principle. But he still discarded the solution as physically irrelevant because it is not globally static. This is clearly expressed in a letter from Weyl to Klein, after he had discussed the issue during a visit of Einstein in Zurich [9]. An important discussion of the redshift of galaxies in de Sitter's model by H. Weyl in 1923 should be mentioned. Weyl introduced an expanding version of the de Sitter model [10]. For *small* distances his result reduced to what later became known as the Hubble law [1]. Independently of Weyl, Cornelius Lanczos introduced in 1922 also a non-stationary interpretation of de Sitter's solution in the form of a Friedmann spacetime with a positive spatial curvature [11]. In a second paper he also derived the redshift for the non-stationary interpretation [12].

Until about 1930 almost everybody believed that the Universe was static, in spite of the two fundamental papers by Friedmann [13] in 1922 and 1924 and Lemaître's independent work [14] in 1927. These path breaking papers were in fact largely ignored. The history of this early period has – as is often the case – been distorted by some widely read documents. Einstein too accepted the idea of an expanding Universe only much later. After the first paper of Friedmann, he published a brief note claiming an error in Friedmann's work; when it was pointed out to him that it was his error, Einstein published a retraction of his comment, with a sentence that luckily was deleted before publication: *"[Friedmann's paper] while mathematically correct is of no physical significance"*. In comments to Lemaître during the Solvay meeting in 1927, Einstein again rejected the expanding universe solutions as physically unacceptable. According to Lemaître, Einstein was telling him: *"Vos calculs sont corrects, mais votre physique est abominable"*. On the other hand, I found in the archive of the ETH many years ago a postcard of Einstein to Weyl from 1923, related to Weyl's reinterpretation of de Sitter's solution, with the following interesting sentence: *"If there is no quasi-static world, then away with the cosmological term"*. This shows once more that history is not as simple as it is often presented.

[1] I recall that the de Sitter model has many different interpretations, depending on the class of fundamental observers that is singled out.

It also is not well-known that Hubble interpreted his famous results on the redshift of the radiation emitted by distant 'nebulae' in the framework of the de Sitter model, as was suggested by Eddington.

The general attitude is well illustrated by the following remark of Eddington at a Royal Society meeting in January, 1930: *"One puzzling question is why there should be only two solutions. I suppose the trouble is that people look for static solutions."*

Lemaître, who had been for a short time a post-doctoral student of Eddington, read this remark in a report to the meeting published in *Observatory*, and wrote to Eddington pointing out his 1927 paper. Eddington had seen that paper, but had completely forgotten about it. But now he was greatly impressed and recommended Lemaître's work in a letter to *Nature*. He also arranged for a translation which appeared in MNRAS [15].

Lemaître's successful explanation of Hubble's discovery finally changed the viewpoint of the majority of workers in the field. At this point Einstein *rejected the cosmological term as superfluous and no longer justified* [16]. At the end of the paper, in which he published his new view, Einstein adds some remarks about the age problem which was quite severe without the Λ-term, since Hubble's value of the Hubble parameter was then about seven times too large. Einstein is, however, not very worried and suggests two ways out. First he says that the matter distribution is in reality inhomogeneous and that the approximate treatment may be illusionary. Then he adds that in astronomy one should be cautious with large extrapolations in time.

Einstein repeated his new standpoint also much later [17], and this was adopted by many other influential workers, e.g., by Pauli [18]. Whether Einstein really considered the introduction of the Λ-term as "the biggest blunder of his life" appears doubtful to me. In his published work and letters I never found such a strong statement. Einstein discarded the cosmological term just for simplicity reasons. For a minority of cosmologists (O.Heckmann, for example [19]), this was not sufficient reason. Paraphrasing Rabi, one might ask: 'who ordered it away'?

At this point I want to leave the classical discussion of the Λ-term, but let me add a few remarks about the quantum aspect of the Λ-problem, where it really becomes very serious. Since quantum physicists had so many other problems, it is not astonishing that in the early years they did not worry about this subject. An exception was Pauli, who wondered in the early 1920s whether the zero-point energy of the radiation field could be gravitationally effective. He estimated the influence of the zero-point energy of the radiation field – cut off at the classical electron radius – on the radius of the universe, and came to the conclusion that it *"could not even reach to the moon"*. (For more on this, see [2]. Pauli's only published remark on his considerations can

be found in his Handbuch article on quantum mechanics [20], in the section on the quantization of the radiation field, where he says: *'Also, as is obvious from experience, the [zero-point energy] does not produce any gravitational field.'*)

For decades nobody else seems to have worried about contributions of quantum fluctuations to the cosmological constant, although physicists learned after Dirac's hole theory that the vacuum state in quantum field theory is not an empty medium, but has interesting physical properties. As far as I know, the first who came back to possible contributions of the vacuum energy density to the cosmological constant was Zel'dovich. He discussed this issue in two papers [21] during the third renaissance period of the Λ-term, but before the advent of spontaneously broken gauge theories. The following remark by him is particularly interesting. Even if one assumes completely ad hoc that the zero-point contributions to the vacuum energy density are exactly cancelled by a bare term, there still remain higher-order effects. In particular, *gravitational* interactions between the particles in the vacuum fluctuations are expected on dimensional grounds to lead to a gravitational self-energy density of order $G\mu^6$, where μ is some cut-off scale. Even for μ as low as 1 GeV (for no good reason) this is about 9 orders of magnitude larger than the observational bound.

This illustrates that there is something profound that we do not understand at all, certainly not in quantum field theory (so far also not in string theory). We are unable to calculate the vacuum energy density in quantum field theories, like the Standard Model of particle physics. But we can attempt to make what appear to be reasonable order-of-magnitude estimates for the various contributions. All expectations are **in gigantic conflict with the facts** (see, e.g., [1]). Trying to arrange the cosmological constant to be zero is unnatural in a technical sense. It is like enforcing a particle to be massless, by fine-tuning the parameters of the theory when there is no symmetry principle which implies a vanishing mass. The vacuum energy density is unprotected from large quantum corrections. This problem is particularly severe in field theories with spontaneous symmetry breaking. In such models there are usually several possible vacuum states with different energy densities. Furthermore, the energy density is determined by what is called the effective potential, and this is a *dynamical* object. Nobody can see any reason why the vacuum of the Standard Model we ended up as the Universe cooled, has – for particle physics standards – an almost vanishing energy density. Most probably, we will only have a satisfactory answer once we shall have a theory which successfully combines the concepts and laws of general relativity about gravity and spacetime structure with those of quantum theory.

3 Microwave background anisotropies

Investigations of the cosmic microwave background have presumably contributed most to the remarkable progress in cosmology during recent years (For a recent review, see [22]. Beside its spectrum, which is Planckian to an incredible degree, we also can study the temperature fluctuations over the "cosmic photosphere" at a redshift $z \approx 1100$. Through these we get access to crucial cosmological information (primordial density spectrum, cosmological parameters, etc). A major reason for why this is possible relies on the fortunate circumstance that the fluctuations are tiny ($\sim 10^{-5}$) at the time of recombination. This allows us to treat the deviations from homogeneity and isotropy for an extended period of time perturbatively, i.e., by linearizing the Einstein and matter equations about solutions of the idealized Friedmann-Lemaître models. Since the physics is effectively *linear*, we can accurately work out the *evolution* of the perturbations during the early phases of the Universe, given a set of cosmological parameters. Confronting this with observations, tells us a lot about the cosmological parameters as well as the initial conditions, and thus about the physics of the very early Universe. Through this window to the earliest phases of cosmic evolution we can, for instance, test general ideas and specific models of inflation.

3.1 Qualitative remarks

Let me begin with some qualitative remarks, before I go into more technical details. Long before recombination (at temperatures $T > 6000K$, say) photons, electrons and baryons were so strongly coupled that these components may be treated together as a single fluid. In addition to this there is also a dark matter component. For all practical purposes the two interact only gravitationally. The investigation of such a two-component fluid for small deviations from an idealized Friedmann behavior is a well-studied application of cosmological perturbation theory.

At a later stage, when decoupling is approached, this approximate treatment breaks down because the mean free path of the photons becomes longer (and finally 'infinite' after recombination). While the electrons and baryons can still be treated as a single fluid, the photons and their coupling to the electrons have to be described by the general relativistic Boltzmann equation. The latter is, of course, again linearized about the idealized Friedmann solution. Together with the linearized fluid equations (for baryons and cold dark matter, say), and the linearized Einstein equations one arrives at a complete system of equations for the various perturbation amplitudes of the metric and matter variables. There exist widely used codes e.g. CMBFAST [23], that

provide the CMB anisotropies – for given initial conditions – to a precision of about 1%. A lot of qualitative and semi-quantitative insight into the relevant physics can, however, be gained by looking at various approximations of the basic dynamical system.

Let us first discuss the temperature fluctuations. What is observed is the temperature autocorrelation:

$$C(\vartheta) := \langle \frac{\Delta T(\mathbf{n})}{T} \cdot \frac{\Delta T(\mathbf{n}')}{T} \rangle = \sum_{l=2}^{\infty} \frac{2l+1}{4\pi} C_l P_l(\cos\vartheta), \tag{1}$$

where ϑ is the angle between the two directions of observation $\mathbf{n}, \mathbf{n}'$, and the average is taken ideally over all sky. The *angular power spectrum* is by definition $\frac{l(l+1)}{2\pi} C_l$ *versus* l $(\vartheta \simeq \pi/l)$.

A characteristic scale, which is reflected in the observed CMB anisotropies, is the sound horizon at last scattering, i.e., the distance over which a pressure wave can propagate until decoupling. This can be computed within the unperturbed model and subtends about half a degree on the sky for typical cosmological parameters. For scales larger than this sound horizon the fluctuations have been laid down in the very early Universe. These have been detected by the COBE satellite. The (gauge invariant brightness) temperature perturbation $\Theta = \Delta T/T$ is dominated by the combination of the intrinsic temperature fluctuations and gravitational redshift or blueshift effects. For example, photons that have to climb out of potential wells for high-density regions are redshifted. One can show that these effects combine for adiabatic initial conditions to $\frac{1}{3}\Psi$, where Ψ is one of the two gravitational Bardeen potentials. The latter, in turn, is directly related to the density perturbations. For scale-free initial perturbations and almost vanishing spatial curvature the corresponding angular power spectrum of the temperature fluctuations turns out to be nearly flat (Sachs-Wolfe plateau; see, e.g., Fig.3 of Ref.[1]).

On the other hand, inside the sound horizon before decoupling, acoustic, Doppler, gravitational redshift, and photon diffusion effects combine to the spectrum of small angle anisotropies. These result from gravitationally driven synchronized acoustic oscillations of the photon-baryon fluid, which are damped by photon diffusion (for details, see again [1]).

A particular realization of $\Theta(\mathbf{n})$, such as the one accessible to us (all sky map from our location), cannot be predicted. Theoretically, Θ is a random field $\Theta(\mathbf{x}, \eta, \mathbf{n})$, depending on the conformal time η, the spatial coordinates, and the observing direction $\mathbf{n}$. Its correlation functions should be rotationally invariant in $\mathbf{n}$, and respect the symmetries of the background time slices. If

we expand Θ in terms of spherical harmonics,

$$\Theta(\mathbf{n}) = \sum_{lm} a_{lm} Y_{lm}(\mathbf{n}), \tag{2}$$

the random variables a_{lm} have to satisfy

$$\langle a_{lm} \rangle = 0, \quad \langle a^\star_{lm} a_{l'm'} \rangle = \delta_{ll'}\delta_{mm'} C_l(\eta), \tag{3}$$

where the $C_l(\eta)$ depend only on η. Hence the correlation function at the present time η_0 is given by (1), where $C_l = C_l(\eta_0)$, and the bracket now denotes the statistical average. Thus,

$$C_l = \frac{1}{2l+1} \langle \sum_{m=-l}^{l} a^\star_{lm} a_{lm} \rangle. \tag{4}$$

The standard deviations $\sigma(C_l)$ measure a fundamental uncertainty in the knowledge we can get about the C_l's. These are called *cosmic variances*, and are most pronounced for low l. In simple inflationary models the a_{lm} are Gaussian distributed, hence

$$\frac{\sigma(C_l)}{C_l} = \sqrt{\frac{2}{2l+1}}. \tag{5}$$

Therefore, the limitation imposed on us (only one sky in one universe) is small for large l.

3.2 Boltzmann hierarchy

The brightness temperature fluctuation can be obtained from the perturbation of the photon distribution function by integrating over the magnitude of the photon momenta. The linearized Botzmann equation can then be translated into an equation for Θ, which we now regard as a function of η, x^i, and γ^j, where the γ^j are the directional cosines of the momentum vector relative to an orthonormal triad field of the unperturbed spatial metric with curvature K. Next one performs a harmonic decomposition of Θ, which reads for the spatially flat case ($K = 0$)

$$\Theta(\eta, \boldsymbol{x}, \boldsymbol{\gamma}) = (2\pi)^{-3} \int d^3k \sum_l \theta_l(\eta, k) G_l(\boldsymbol{x}, \boldsymbol{\gamma}; \boldsymbol{k}), \tag{6}$$

where

$$G_l(\boldsymbol{x}, \boldsymbol{\gamma}; \boldsymbol{k}) = (-i)^l P_l(\hat{\boldsymbol{k}} \cdot \boldsymbol{\gamma}) \exp(i\boldsymbol{k} \cdot \boldsymbol{x}). \tag{7}$$

The dynamical variables $\theta_l(\eta)$ are the *brightness moments*, and should be regarded as random variables. Boltzmann's equation implies the following hierarchy of ordinary differential equations for the brightness moments[2] $\theta_l(\eta)$ (if polarization effects are neglected):

$$\theta_0' = -\frac{1}{3}k\theta_1 - \Phi', \tag{8}$$

$$\theta_1' = k\Big(\theta_0 + \Psi - \frac{2}{5}\theta_2\Big) - \dot{\tau}(\theta_1 - V_b), \tag{9}$$

$$\theta_2' = k\Big(\frac{2}{3}\theta_1 - \frac{3}{7}\theta_3\Big) - \dot{\tau}\frac{9}{10}\theta_2, \tag{10}$$

$$\theta_l' = k\Big(\frac{l}{2l-1}\theta_{l-1} - \frac{l+1}{2l+3}\theta_{l+1}\Big), \quad l > 2. \tag{11}$$

Here, V_b is the gauge invariant scalar velocity perturbation of the baryons, $\dot{\tau} = x_e n_e \sigma_T a/a_0$, where a is the scale factor, $x_e n_e$ the unperturbed free electron density (x_e = ionization fraction), and σ_T the Thomson cross section. Moreover, Φ and Ψ denote the Bardeen potentials. (For further details, see Sect.6 of [1].)

The C_l are determined by an integral over k, involving a primordial power spectrum (of curvature perturbations) and the $|\theta_l(\eta)|^2$, for the corresponding initial conditions (their transfer functions).

This system of equations is completed by the linearized fluid and Einstein equations. Various approximations for the Boltzmann hierarchy provide already a lot of insight. In particular, one can very nicely understand how damped acoustic oscillations are generated, and in which way they are influenced by the baryon fraction (again, see Ref.[1]). A typical theoretical CMB spectrum is shown in Fig.3 of [1]. (Beside the scalar contribution in the sense of cosmological perturbation theory, considered so far, the tensor contribution due to gravity waves is also shown there.)

4 Polarization

A polarization map of the CMB radiation provides important additional information to that obtainable from the temperature anisotropies. For example, we can get constraints about the epoch of reionization. Most importantly, future polarization observations may reveal a stochastic background of gravity waves, generated in the very early Universe. In this section we give a brief introduction to the study of CMB polarization.

[2] In the literature the normalization of the θ_l is sometimes chosen differently: $\theta_l \to (2l+1)\theta_l$.

The mechanism which partially polarizes the CMB radiation is similar to that for the scattered light from the sky. Consider first scattering at a single electron of unpolarized radiation coming in from all directions . Due to the familiar polarization dependence of the differential Thomson cross section, the scattered radiation is, in general, polarized. It is easy to compute the corresponding Stokes parameters. Not surprisingly, they are not all equal to zero if and only if the intensity distribution of the incoming radiation has a non-vanishing quadrupole moment. The Stokes parameters Q and U are proportional to the overlap integral with the combinations $Y_{2,2} \pm Y_{2,-2}$ of the spherical harmonics, while V vanishes.) This is basically the reason why a CMB polarization map traces (in the tight coupling limit) the quadrupole temperature distribution on the last scattering surface.

The polarization tensor of an all sky map of the CMB radiation can be parametrized in temperature fluctuation units, relative to the orthonormal basis $\{d\vartheta, \sin\vartheta \;\; d\varphi\}$ of the two sphere, in terms of the Pauli matrices as $\Theta \cdot 1 + Q\sigma_3 + U\sigma_1 + V\sigma_2$. The Stokes parameter V vanishes (no circular polarization). Therefore, the polarization properties can be described by the following symmetric trace-free tensor on S^2:

$$(\mathcal{P}_{ab}) = \begin{pmatrix} Q & U \\ U & -Q \end{pmatrix}. \tag{12}$$

As for gravity waves, the components Q and U transform under a rotation of the 2-bein by an angle α as

$$Q \pm iU \to e^{\pm 2i\alpha}(Q \pm iU), \tag{13}$$

and are thus of spin-weight 2. $\mathcal{P}_{ab}$ can be decomposed uniquely into *'electric'* and *'magnetic'* parts:

$$\mathcal{P}_{ab} = E_{;ab} - \frac{1}{2}g_{ab}\Delta E + \frac{1}{2}(\varepsilon_a{}^c B_{;bc} + \varepsilon_b{}^c B_{;ac}). \tag{14}$$

Expanding here the scalar functions E and B in terms of spherical harmonics, we obtain an expansion of the form

$$\mathcal{P}_{ab} = \sum_{l=2}^{\infty}\sum_m \left[a^E_{(lm)}Y^E_{(lm)ab} + a^B_{(lm)}Y^B_{(lm)ab}\right] \tag{15}$$

in terms of the tensor harmonics:

$$Y^E_{(lm)ab} := N_l(Y_{(lm);ab} - \frac{1}{2}g_{ab}Y_{(lm);c}{}^c), \quad Y^B_{(lm)ab} := \frac{1}{2}N_l(Y_{(lm);ac}\varepsilon^c{}_b + a \leftrightarrow b), \tag{16}$$

where $l \geq 2$ and

$$N_l \equiv \left(\frac{2(l-2)!}{(l+2)!} \right)^{1/2} .$$

Equivalently, one can write this as

$$Q + iU = \sqrt{2} \sum_{l=2}^{\infty} \sum_{m} \left[a^E_{(lm)} + i a^B_{(lm)} \right] {}_2Y_l^m, \tag{17}$$

where ${}_sY_l^m$ are the spin-s harmonics.

As in Eq.(2) the multipole moments $a^E_{(lm)}$ and $a^B_{(lm)}$ are random variables, and we have equations analogous to (3):

$$C_l^{TE} = \frac{1}{2l+1} \sum_m \langle a^{\Theta\star}_{lm} a^E_{lm} \rangle, \quad etc. \tag{18}$$

(We have now put the superscript Θ on the a_{lm} of the temperature fluctuations.) The C_l's determine the various angular correlation functions. For example, one easily finds

$$\langle \Theta(\boldsymbol{n}) Q(\boldsymbol{n'}) \rangle = \sum_l \; C_l^{TE} \frac{2l+1}{4\pi} N_l P_l^2(\cos\vartheta). \tag{19}$$

For the space-time dependent Stokes parameters Q and U of the radiation field we can perform a normal mode decomposition analogous to (6). If, for simplicity, we again consider only scalar perturbations this reads

$$Q \pm iU = (2\pi)^{-3} \int d^3k \sum_l (E_l \pm i B_l) \, {}_{\pm 2}G_l^0, \tag{20}$$

where

$${}_sG_l^m(\boldsymbol{x}, \boldsymbol{\gamma}; \boldsymbol{k}) = (-i)^l \left(\frac{2l+1}{4\pi} \right)^{1/2} {}_sY_l^m(\boldsymbol{\gamma}) \exp(i\boldsymbol{k} \cdot \boldsymbol{x}), \tag{21}$$

if the mode vector $\mathbf{k}$ is chosen as the polar axis. (Note that G_l in (7) is equal to ${}_0G_l^0$.)

The Boltzmann equation implies a coupled hierarchy for the moments θ_l, E_l, and B_l [24], [25]. It turns out that the B_l vanish for scalar perturbations. Non-vanishing magnetic multipoles would be a unique signature for a spectrum of gravity waves. In a sudden decoupling approximation, the present electric multipole moments can be expressed in terms of the brightness quadrupole moment on the last scattering surface and spherical Bessel functions as

$$\frac{E_l(\eta_0, k)}{2l+1} \simeq \frac{3}{8} \theta_2(\eta_{dec}, k) \frac{l^2 j_l(k\eta_0)}{(k\eta_o)^2}. \tag{22}$$

Here one sees how the observable E_l's trace the quadrupole temperature anisotropy on the last scattering surface. In the tight coupling approximation the latter is proportional to the dipole moment θ_1.

5 Observational results

In recent years several experiments gave clear evidence for multiple peaks in the angular temperature power spectrum at positions expected on the basis of the simplest inflationary models and big bang nucleosynthesis [26]. These results have been confirmed and substantially improved by WMAP [27] (see, in particular, Fig.12 of Ref.[26]).

In spite of the high accuracy of the data, it is not possible to extract unambiguously cosmological parameters, because there are intrinsic degeneracies, especially when tensor modes are included. These can only be lifted if other cosmological information is used. Beside the supernova results, use has been made for instance of the available information for the galaxy power spectrum (in particular from the 2-degree-Field Galaxy Redshift Survey (2dFGRS)), and limits for the Hubble parameter. For example, if one adds to the CMB data the well-founded constraint $H_0 \geq 50\ km/s/Mpc$, then the total density parameter Ω_{tot} has to be in the range $0.98 < \Omega_{tot} < 1.08$ (95 %). The Universe is thus *spatially almost flat*. In what follows we therefore always assume $K = 0$.

Table 1 is extracted from the extended analysis [28] of the WMAP data and other cosmological information. It shows the 68% confidence ranges for some of the cosmological parameters for two types of fits, assuming a ΛCDM model. In the first only the CMB data are used (but tensor modes are included), while in the second these data are combined with the 2dFGRS power spectrum (assuming adiabatic, Gaussian initial conditions described by power laws).

Table 1.

Parameter	CMB alone	CMB and 2dFGRS
$\Omega_b h_0^2$	0.024 ± 0.001	0.023 ± 0.001
$\Omega_M h_0^2$	0.14 ± 0.02	0.134 ± 0.006
h_0	0.72 ± 0.05	0.71 ± 0.04
Ω_b	0.047 ± 0.006	$\simeq$ same
Ω_M	0.29 ± 0.07	$\simeq$ same

Note that there is little difference between the two columns. The age of the Universe for these parameters is close to 14 Gyr. Another interesting result coming from the rise of the temperature-polarization correlation function at large scales (small l) is that reionization of the Universe has set in surprisingly early –, at a redshift of $z_r = 17 \pm 5$, with a corresponding optical

depth $\tau = 0.17 \pm 0.06$.

Before the new results possible admixtures of isocurvature modes were not strongly constraint. But now the measured temperature-polarization correlations imply that the primordial fluctuations were primarily *adiabatic*. Admixtures of isocurvature modes do not improve the fit.

One worry is that the quadrupole amplitude (C_2) measured by WMAP is lower than expected according to the best fit ΛCDM model [28]. This issue has led to lots of discussions. A recent reanalysis [29] of the effects of Galactic cuts indicates that this discrepancy is not particularly significant, being in the region of a few percent.

6 Concluding remarks

A wide range of astronomical data support the following 'concordance' ΛCDM model: The Universe is spatially flat and dominated by vacuum energy density and weakly interacting cold dark matter. Furthermore, the primordial fluctuations are adiabatic and nearly scale invariant, as predicted in simple inflationary models.

A vacuum energy with density parameter $\Omega_\Lambda \simeq 0.7$ is so surprising that it should be examined whether this conclusion is really unavoidable. Since we do not have a tested theory predicting the spectrum of primordial fluctuations, it appears reasonable to consider a wider range of possibilities than simple power laws. An instructive attempt in this direction has been made in [30], by constructing an Einstein-de Sitter model with $\Omega_\Lambda = 0$, fitting the CMB data as well as the power spectrum of 2dFGRS. In this the Hubble constant is, however, required to be rather low: $H_0 \simeq 46\ km/s/Mpc$. The authors argue that this cannot definitely be excluded, because 'physical' methods lead mostly to relatively low values of H_0. In order to be consistent with matter fluctuations on cluster scales they add relic neutrionos with degenerate masses of order eV and a small contribution of quintessence with zero pressure ($w = 0$). In addition, they have to ignore the direct evidence for an accelerating Universe from the Hubble-diagram for distant Type Ia supernovae, on the basis of remaining systematic uncertainties.

It is very likely that the present concordance model will survive, but for the time being it is healthy to remain sceptical until further evidence is accumulating.

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